DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 112 RC 020 698

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TITLE	Deciding To Be Legal: A Maya Community in Houston.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-56639-257-8
PUB DATE	94
NOTE	220p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Temple Univ. Press, Broad and Oxford Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19122 (cloth: ISBN-1-56639-256-X, $44.95; paper: ISBN-1-56639-257-8, $16.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Acculturation; *Adjustment (to Environment); American Indian Culture; Community Study; Cultural Influences; Educational Attitudes; Ethnography; Females; Foreign Countries; *Immigration; *Latin Americans; Males; Migrant Workers; Parent Responsibility; Relocation; Sex Role; *Social Networks; *Undocumented Immigrants
IDENTIFIERS	Guatemala; Immigration Reform and Control Act 1986; Legal Status; *Maya (People); *Texas (Houston)

ABSTRACT

This book examines the settlement process of undocumented migrant workers through an ethnographic study of a Houston (Texas) community of Mayas from a township in Totonicapan, Guatemala. The community is traced from its genesis in 1978, when a few men left the township in search of economic opportunity, to the complex effects of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. Data were gathered through interviews and observations during the author's 3-year residence and participation in the community. The book's first section focuses on community formation in Houston: the transfer and reproduction of cultural resources associated with a common community of origin and a Maya identity; and the settlement process, including residential configuration of the community, transformation of kinship structures, recruitment networks, living arrangements, job networks, work experiences, and formation of a community church. The second section examines the social and technical processes of legalization from the Maya perspective, community changes resulting from legalization, and implications for migration theory and immigration policy formation. Major themes include the differing settlement experiences of men and women; the diverse motivations to become legalized or not; and the exceptional success of this rural, traditional, relatively unskilled population due to extensive community-based networks and strong ties to the home community in Guatemala. Individuals' attitudes toward legalization frequently were influenced by their aspirations for their children: education in the United States versus growing up in the Maya culture in Guatemala. Contains 127 references and an index. (SV)

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